FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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DERBY DREAM WITHIN REACH OF CASSE BARN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, April 27, 2017) – Two-year-old champion Classic Empire and Florida Derby (Grade I) runner-up State of Honor could bring a lifelong dream to the Mark Casse barn in the $2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) on Saturday, May 6.

“Every night I dream of winning the Kentucky Derby and it’s surreal to have the chance to walk over with this year’s possible favorite (Classic Empire),” assistant trainer Norm Casse said. “We’ve had such a frustrating winter and, knock on wood, things are going very well with him.”

The colt’s trainer, Mark, is scheduled to arrive Thursday evening.

Classic Empire, who was the unanimous 2-year-old champion by winning the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI), came back over the winter with several training issues that forced the colt to be sent to the Winding Oaks Training Center in Ocala, Florida.

“We went back to step one,” Casse said. “Martin Rivera, who first rode Classic Empire as a baby, got back on him to try and figure out his quirks. We brought Martin with us to Arkansas and, since that worked out, he’s here at Churchill.”

“I’ve worked for the Casses for almost 15 years now,” Rivera said. “We have had a great relationship over that time and I’ve worked all of the babies Mark buys at the sale.”

“We’ve been very happy with how well Classic Empire has been doing in his training,” Rivera continued. “He seems like a happy horse here and he gets over the surface great.”

With a start in the Kentucky Derby, Classic Empire would be the richest horse to start in the Kentucky Derby with $2,120,220 in earnings, surpassing Snow Chief’s record in 1986 with $1,719,040.

Classic Empire galloped 1 ½ miles Thursday morning with Rivera aboard and is expected to breeze sometime this weekend.

Casse’s second Derby hope, State of Honor, has been training steadily at Churchill Downs including a 1 ½-mile gallop Thursday with regular rider Orlando Cross up. The Ontario-bred son of To Honor and Serve is scheduled to breeze Friday morning at 8:30.

In addition to State of Honor, the following Derby horses are scheduled to work at 8:30: Gunnevera, Practical Joke, Always Dreaming, Battalion Runner, Patch and Tapwrit. Malagacy is slated to work before the 8 a.m. renovation break.

Oaks fillies planning to work during the 8:30-8:45 window are Tequilita and Jordan’s Henny. Wicked Lick is slated to work with the time to be determined and Vexatious may work.

Scheduled to work at Keeneland is Derby hopeful Irap and Oaks contender Daddys Lil Darling.

OTHER KENTUCKY DERBY NOTES

ALWAYS DREAMING/BATTALION RUNNER/MALAGACY/PATCH/TAPWRIT – Trainer Todd Pletcher’s Derby roster all posted 1 3/8-mile gallops Thursday morning and are slated to breeze Friday morning.

“I think we may have a window of opportunity tomorrow with the weather,” Pletcher said. “I am looking forward to breezing them and taking a little edge off.”

Sumaya U.S. Stables’ Malagacy galloped shortly after the track opened for training with Isabelle Bourez aboard. No decision has been made on his Kentucky Derby status.

Coming out at 8:30 was the quartet of Brooklyn Boyz Stables and Teresa Viola Racing Stables’ Always Dreaming (Adele Bellinger up), St. Elias Stable’s Battalion Runner (Nick Bush up), Calumet Farm’s Patch (Bourez up) and Bridlewood Farm, Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners and Robert LaPenta’s Tapwrit (Silvio Pioli up).

John Velazquez (Always Dreaming) is the only rider Pletcher has confirmed for Derby 143.

FAST AND ACCURATE – Kendall Hansen, Skychai Racing and Bode Miller’s Fast and Accurate galloped 1 1/8 miles at Trackside Louisville Thursday morning at 6 o’clock for trainer Mike Maker.

The Spiral (GI) winner is expected to van from Trackside to Churchill Downs Sunday and breeze at 8:30 a.m. under regular exercise rider Joel Cano.

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GUNNEVERA – Peacock Racing Stables’ Gunnevera galloped 1 ½ miles under exercise rider Victor Farrell after the Thursday morning track renovation break.

“He really liked the track this morning,” trainer Antonio Sano said of the conditions that were on the damp side after sporadic morning showers.

Sano had planned to work Gunnevera on Saturday, but with a less-than-favorable forecast for that morning has opted to work Friday morning at 8:30 instead.

HENCE/LOCAL HERO/LOOKIN AT LEE/UNTRAPPED – Trainer Steve Asmussen’s contingent of horses galloped Thursday morning at Churchill Downs.

Hence, with Angel Garcia up, and Untrapped, with exercise rider Juan Vargas aboard, trained during the Derby and Oaks exclusive training period at 8:30.

Lookin At Lee galloped at 7:15 while Local Hero galloped at 7:45. Both horses were ridden by Garcia.

Lookin At Lee would be the next horse into the Derby field with any additional defections. Local Hero is No. 24 on the preference list.

J BOYS ECHO – Albaugh Family Stable’s J Boys Echo galloped 1 ½ miles Wednesday morning at 8:30 with regular exercise rider Tammy Fox aboard for trainer Dale Romans. Jockey Luis Saez is confirmed to ride the colt in the Kentucky Derby.

“Robby (Albarado) is going to talk with Luis before the race,” Romans said of J Boys Echo’s previous rider who was injured in a race last week at Keeneland. “It’s been a tough couple of days and Robby was the first one to tell me he’d talk with Luis about the horse.”

J Boys Echo is on target to breeze Saturday morning at 8:30 with Fox aboard.

McCRAKEN – Whitham Thoroughbreds’ McCraken galloped 1 ½ miles after the morning renovation break with exercise rider Yoni Orantes aboard for trainer Ian Wilkes.

McCraken, who has had two works here since finishing third in the Blue Grass Stakes (GI) on April 8, is scheduled to have his final pre-Derby breeze most likely on Sunday.

“Weather? What weather?” Wilkes said with a laugh about any concerns over the forecast before turning to his rider. “Brian (jockey Brian Hernandez Jr.), he’s been in the rain before, hasn’t he?”

PRACTICAL JOKE – Klaravich Stables and William Lawrence’s Practical Joke galloped 1 ½ miles after the renovation break with exercise rider Fernando Rivera aboard.

Trained by Chad Brown, Practical Joke is scheduled to work in company at 8:30 Friday.

SHAPING UP: THE KENTUCKY DERBY – Likely starters in the 143rd running of the $2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) to be run for 3-year-olds at 1 ¼ miles on Saturday, May 6: Always Dreaming (John Velazquez), Battalion Runner (TBA), Battle of Midway (Flavien Prat), Classic Empire (Julien Leparoux), Fast and Accurate (TBA), Girvin (Mike Smith), Gormley (Victor Espinoza), Gunnevera (Javier Castellano), Hence (Florent Geroux), Irap (Mario Gutierrez), Irish War Cry (Rajiv Maragh), J Boys Echo (Luis Saez), McCraken (Brian Hernandez Jr.), Patch (TBA), Practical Joke (Joel Rosario), State of Honor (Jose Lezcano), Tapwrit (Jose Ortiz), Thunder Snow (Ire) (Christophe Soumillon) and Untrapped (TBA).

Possible starters within the Top 20 on the preference list: Malagacy (TBA).

Next up in order of preference: Lookin At Lee (TBA), Sonneteer (Kent Desormeaux), Royal Mo (Gary Stevens), Local Hero (TBA), Master Plan (TBA) and Petrov (TBA).

KENTUCKY OAKS NOTES

EVER SO CLEVER – Fantasy (GIII) winner Ever So Clever galloped in the first set of horses for trainer Steve Asmussen Thursday morning with Angel Garcia aboard.

FARRELL – Coffeepot Stables’ Farrell walked the shedrow at trainer Wayne Catalano’s barn a day after working six furlongs in 1:13 under jockey Channing Hill.

“She cleaned the feed tub … licked it clean,” Catalano said. “She is fine this morning.”

Wednesday’s work was the second here for Farrell since winning the Fair Grounds Oaks (GI) April 1. By working Wednesday, Catalano avoided Thursday’s off and on showers during training hours.

Asked which was tougher … waiting out the next eight days until the Oaks or dodging the weather … Catalano said, “The waiting. You can work around the weather and dodge some things and squeeze in what you have to do.”

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JORDAN'S HENNY – Erv Woolsey and Ralph Kinder’s Jordan’s Henny jogged a mile under Edgar Cano after the renovation break.

With the Wednesday defection of Chanel’s Legacy from Oaks consideration, Jordan’s Henny moved into the top 14 point earners and a spot in the starting gate May 5.

“We had pretty much been training like we were going to get in,” said trainer Mike Tomlinson of Jordan’s Henny, who was third in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII) in her most recent start. “We kept plugging along. If she had not made the Oaks, we were looking at the Black-Eyed Susan (GII) two weeks later at Pimlico.”

Tomlinson plans to work Jordan’s Henny Friday morning with jockey Joe Rocco Jr. up.

LOCKDOWN – Juddmonte Farms’ Lockdown jogged under exercise rider Jo Lawson before the renovation break.

“We changed things up a little and took her out early and caught a break from the rain,” trainer Bill Mott said.

MISS SKY WARRIOR – Trainer Kelly Breen discovered the meaning of widely scattered showers in Louisville, Kentucky, Thursday morning when he breezed Miss Sky Warrior a half-mile in :49.20 with jockey Paco Lopez up.

A brief shower hit Churchill Downs at 5 o’clock. Breen took his first horse out at 6 to the damp track, noting “It’s pretty good. I’ll take it.”

Miss Sky Warrior was scheduled to work at 8:30, but with clouds rolling in, Breen got Miss Sky Warrior tacked up and ready to go before 7 and then headed to the grandstand to watch the work.

“When she got to the seven-eighths pole, I could hear the rain hitting the tents in the turn from the grandstand,” Breen said. “Then, when she started her work, the rain stopped.”

Over a track listed as fast, Miss Sky Warrior produced splits of :12.40, :24.80, :36.80 and :49.20 with gallop-outs of 1:02.40 for five furlongs and 1:15.80 for six.

“I thought it was perfect. She got over the track really good,” said Lopez, who had worked Miss Sky Warrior a half-mile in :49 last Thursday.

Owned by Arlene’s Sun Star Stable, Miss Sky Warrior comes into the Oaks on a five-race win streak that was capped by a 13-length victory in the Gazelle (GII) at the Oaks distance of 1 1/8 miles.

“The work went well,” Breen said. “It was just maintenance. We already have our mile and eighth and some of those other guys don’t. We have eight days to go. She will walk tomorrow. All we have to do is just stay steady.”

SALTY – Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII) winner Salty galloped 1 ½ miles Thursday morning at 8:30 with Froylan Garcia up. Salty is on schedule to breeze Friday morning at 8:30.

TEQUILITA – Dorothy Matz’s Tequilita galloped on her first morning at Churchill Downs after arriving Wednesday afternoon from Keeneland.

Runner-up in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII) in her most recent start, Tequilita was partnered by Jo Saville Thursday morning.

Trained by Michael Matz, Tequilita had two works at Keeneland since the Gulfstream Park Oaks and likely will work Friday morning at 8:30. “I’ll be watching the weather and whatever day looks best, she’ll work,” the trainer said.

VEXATIOUS – Calumet Farm’s Vexatious galloped 1 ½ miles toward the end of training hours at 10 o’clock with exercise rider Freddy Quevero up.

Trainer Neil Drysdale, who arrived in Louisville after midnight Thursday morning, said the weather would determine when the filly would work.

WICKED LICK – Lee Mauberret’s Wicked Lick galloped 1 ½ miles under Leo Garcia shortly after 6 o’clock.

Trainer Brendan Walsh said the filly would work Friday morning at a time to be determined.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Santa Anita Oaks (GI) winner Paradise Woods breezed six furlongs in 1:12.40 Thursday morning at Santa Anita for trainer Richard Mandella. The filly is expected to arrive at Churchill Downs Monday. … Ashland (GI) runner-up Daddys Lil Darling is scheduled to breeze Friday morning at Keeneland with jockey Julien Leparoux aboard for trainer Kenny McPeek. The 3-year-old daughter of Scat Daddy is expected to arrive at Churchill Downs Saturday or Sunday.

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SHAPING UP: THE KENTUCKY OAKS – Likely starters in the 143rd running of the $1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to be run for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on Friday, May 5: *Abel Tasman* (Mike Smith), *Daddys Lil Darling* (Julien Leparoux), *Ever So Clever* (Luis Contreras), *Farrell* (Channing Hill), *Jordan's Henny* (Joe Roero), *Miss Sky Warrior* (Paco Lopez), *Paradise Woods* (Flavien Prat), *Sailor's Valentine* (Corey Lanerie), *Salty* (Joel Rosario), *Tequilita* (Luis Saez), *Vexatious* (Kent Desormeaux), *Wicked Lick* (Brian Hernandez Jr.).

Possible starters within the Top 14 on the preference list: *Lockdown* (Jose Ortiz), *Someday Soon* (TBA).

Next up in order of preference: *Mopotism* (TBA), *Torrent* (TBA), *Summer Luck* (TBA).

KNOWN WORKOUT SCHEDULES

**FRIDAY** – *Always Dreaming* (Trainer Todd Pletcher, Barn 40, 8:30 a.m.); *Battalion Runner* (Pletcher, Barn 40, 8:30 a.m.); *Gunnevera* (Antonio Sano, Barn 41, 8:30 a.m.); *Jordan's Henny* (Mike Tomlinson, Barn 1, 8:30 a.m.); *Malagacy* (Pletcher, Barn 40, TBA); *Patch* (Pletcher, Barn 40, 8:30 a.m.); *Salty* (Mark Casse, Barn 36, 8:30 a.m.); *State of Honor* (Casse, Barn 36, 8:30 a.m.); *Tapwrit* (Pletcher, Barn 40, 8:30 a.m.); *Tequilita* (Michael Matz, Barn 25, 8:30 a.m.); *Wicked Lick* (Brendan Walsh, Barn 9, TBA). Possibly: *Vexatious* (Neil Drysdale, Barn 43, TBA)

**SATURDAY** – *J Boys Echo* (Dale Romans, Barn 4, 8:30 a.m.).

**SUNDAY** – *Fast and Accurate* (Mike Maker, Trackside Barn K, 8:30 a.m.);

KNOWN ARRIVAL SCHEDULES

**SATURDAY (BY PLANE FROM CALIFORNIA)** – *Abel Tasman* (Bob Baffert, Barn 33); *Battle of Midway* (Jerry Hollendorfer, Barn TBA); *Finest City* (Ian Kruljac, Barn TBA); *Sonneteer* (Keith Desormeaux, Barn 25); *Why Two* (Mike Machowsky, 39).

**SATURDAY OR SUNDAY (BY VAN FROM KEEENELAND)** – *Daddys Lil Darling* (Kenny McPeek, Barn 7); *Irap* (Doug O’Neill, Barn 41)

**SUNDAY (BY PLANE FROM DUBAI TO CINCINNATI, VAN TO LOUISVILLE)** – Tentative: *Thunder Snow* (Ire) (Saeed bin Suroor, Barn 17)

**SUNDAY OR MONDAY (BY VAN FROM MARYLAND)** – *Irish War Cry* (Graham Motion, Barn TBA)

**MONDAY (BY PLANE FROM CALIFORNIA)** – *Masochistic* (Ron Ellis, Barn 39); *Bal A Bali* (Richard Mandella, Barn TBA); *Paradise Woods* (Richard Mandella, Barn TBA); *Conquest Farenheit* (Peter Miller, Barn TBA); *Richards Boy* (Peter Miller Barn TBA); *Solid Wager* (Peter Miller, Barn TBA); *Storm the Hill* (Peter Miller, Barn TBA); *Dennmans Call* (Doug O’Neill, Barn 41); *Mopotism* (Doug O’Neill, Barn 41); *What What What* (Doug O’Neill, Barn 41); *Union Strike* (Mick Ruis, Barn TBA); *Gormley* (John Shirreffs, Barn 42); *Royal Mo* (John Shirreffs, Barn 42).

BARN LIST

**KENTUCKY DERBY** – *Always Dreaming* (Trainer Todd Pletcher, Barn 40); *Battalion Runner* (Pletcher, Barn 40); *Classic Empire* (Mark Casse, Barn 36); *Fast and Accurate* (Mike Maker, Trackside Barn K); *Gunnevera* (Antonio Sano, Barn 41); *Hence* (Asmussen, Barn 38); *J Boys Echo* (Dale Romans, Barn 4); *Local Hero* (Asmussen, Barn 38); *Lookin At Lee* (Asmussen, Barn 38); *Malagacy* (Pletcher, Barn 40); *McCraeken* (Ian Wilkes, Barn 26); *Patch* (Pletcher, Barn 40); *Practical Joke* (Chad Brown, Barn 42); *State of Honor* (Casse, Barn 36); *Tapwrit* (Pletcher, Barn 40); *Untrapped* (Asmussen, Barn 38).

**KENTUCKY OAKS** – *Ever So Clever* (Trainer Steve Asmussen, Barn 38); *Farrell* (Wayne Catalano, Barn 30); *Jordan's Henny* (Mike Tomlinson, Barn 1); *Lockdown* (Bill Mott, Barn 19); *Miss Sky Warrior* (Kelly Breen, Barn 43); *Salty* (Mark Casse, Barn 36); *Tequilita* (Michael Matz, Barn 25), *Vexatious* (Neil Drysdale, Barn 43); *Wicked Lick* (Brendan Walsh, Barn 9).
PROSPECTIVE FIELDS FOR UPCOMING STAKES

$100,000 KENTUCKY JUVENILE (Entries taken Saturday, race Thursday, May 4) – Probable: Amberspatriot, Go Chiva Go, Gritter Man, Happy Like a Fool, Mecrin, Mugrosito, Trickizar, Two Grand, Waki Patriot

$400,000 ALYSHEBA (GII) (Entries taken Tuesday, May 2, race Friday, May 5) – Probable: American Freedom, Behesht, Breaking Lucky, El Huerfano, International Star, Noble Bird

$300,000 LA TROIENNE (GI) (Entries taken Tuesday, May 2, race Friday, May 5) – Probable: Eskenformoney, Paid Up Subscriber, Streamline, Walkabout

$200,000 EIGHT BELLES (GII) (Entries taken Tuesday, May 2, race Friday, May 5) – Probable: Benner Island, Cajun Delta Dawn, Florida Fabulous, Ghalia, Let It Ride Mom, Lovely Bernadette, Mopotism, Pretty City Dancer, Summer Luck, What What What

$150,000 EDGEWOOD (GIII) (Entries taken Tuesday, May 2, race Friday, May 5) – Probable: Bernadiva, Dream Dancing, Purely A Dream, Stallion Heiress, Storm the Hill, You Missed It

$150,000 TWIN SPIRES TURF SPRINT (GIII) (Entries taken Tuesday, May 2, race Friday, May 5) – Probable: Black Bear, Derek’s Smile, Green Mask, Holding Gold, Power Alert, Pure Sensation, Why Two

$500,000 WOODFORD RESERVE TURF CLASSIC (GI) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Bal A Bal, Conquest Panthera, Divisidero, Enterprising, Platlined, Oscar Nominated

$300,000 HUMANA DISTAFF (GI) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Carina Mia, Finest City, Paulasilverlining

$500,000 CHURCHILL DOWNS (GII) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Awesome Slew, Clearly Now, Denman’s Call, Masochistic, Solid Wager, Tom’s Ready

$300,000 CHURCHILL DISTAFF TURF MILE (GII) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Believe In Bertie, Linda, Miss Temple City, Mississippi Delta, Roca Rojo

$300,000 AMERICAN TURF (GII) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Conquest Farenheit, La Coronel, Made You Look, Oscar Performance, Parlor, Ritzy A.P.

$250,000 PAT DAY MILE (GIII) (Entries taken Wednesday, May 3, race Saturday, May 6) – Probable: Bitumen, Bobby On Fleek, Excitations, Impresssive Edge, No Dozing, Sonic Mule, Uncontested, Warrior’s Club, You’re To Blame

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT …

DERBYGIVES.COM 50/50 RAFFLE – The Churchill Downs Incorporated Foundation will host a trio of nationwide online 50/50 charitable raffle drawings on Thurby (May 4), Kentucky Oaks Day (May 5) and Kentucky Derby Day (May 6) to help raise money for its charitable initiatives, including Thoroughbred aftercare; arts and educational opportunities for stable area employees; and breast and ovarian cancer research and prevention. Raffle tickets are on sale now at www.DerbyGives.com for $5 in jurisdictions where online wagering is permitted. The winner will receive half of each day’s sale and the other half will go toward the charitable initiative. The Churchill Downs Incorporated Foundation has donated more than $2.2 million and thousands of volunteer hours to charitable partners, including more than $740,000 for education and prevention of breast cancer and more than $140,000 to Thoroughbred retirement aftercare.

ENHANCED APP FOR ON-TRACK GUESTS – Churchill Downs Racetrack has launched a new version of its on-track mobile app to provide guests with additional features and information to enhance their experience at the racetrack and The Kentucky Derby presented by Yum! Brands. The new features offer fans easy access to equine, racing and wagering information, as well as up-to-date information about each day’s events and news. Additionally, guests can wager from their mobile device; find parking and get directions to seating locations; skip food and beverage lines in seats where Express Pickup or In-Seat Delivery is offered; and buy, manage and scan mobile admission tickets. The updated app is available at iTunes at https://appsto.re/us/USS6bb.i and the Google Play Store at https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.venuenext.churchilldowns&hl=en.

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WORKOUT VIDEOS

Thursday, April 27, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFEIUXoKKLs

Wednesday, April 26, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwvX6FhLHe4

Tuesday, April 25, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MULqY6_yM0

Monday, April 24, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uF3Fs4JUYkM&t=1s

Sunday, April 23, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40LNE7itWks

Saturday, April 22, 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97zKxR_qb0U

PAST PERFORMANCES

Brinset.com Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks Past Performances

SILKS

First Draft of Kentucky Derby

First Draft of Kentucky Oaks

-END-